

Message Text

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46

ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NASA-01 OMB-01 PPT-01 SCA-01

OC-06 CCO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00 DOTE-00 EB-07

INR-07 NSAE-00 CIEP-01 FAA-00 IO-13 CPR-01 SY-05

AID-05 PC-01 PM-04 H-02 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /112 W
----- 017987

R 051340Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8351

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

DIA WASHDC

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PDIP

SUBJ: HUNDRED THOUSAND ATTEND PRIME MINISTER'S FUNERAL

REF: TANANRIVE 1247

1. TANANARIVE'S MUNICIPAL STADIUM WAS JAMMED WITH ABOUT 100,000 PEOPLE AUGUST 4 FOR FUNERAL OF PRIME MINISTER RAKOTOMALALA ET AL. EXCEPT FOR SIZE OF CROWD, WHICH SANG SEVERAL HYMNS WITH CONSIDERABLE FERVOR, FUNERAL WAS NOT NOTEWORTHY. PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA SPOKE FOR OVER TWENTY MINUTES, EXCLUSIVELY IN NON-POLEMICAL EULOGY. NO WORD HAS YET EMERGED REGARDING SUCCESSORS FOR ANY OF THE DECEASED.

2. GDRM HAS INFORMED ALL AIRLINES SERVICING MADAGASCAR THAT, EXCEPT FOR PERMANENT RESIDENTS HERE, NO FOREIGNERS WILL BE ALLOWED TO ENTER MADAGASCAR UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE, EVEN IF THEY HAVE VALID VISAS. RESTRICTION DOES NOT

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APPLY TO PERSONNEL WITH DIPLOMATIC OR OFFICIAL PASSPORTS.

IN ADDITION, RESTRICTION REPORTEDLY DOES NOT AFFECT ANYONE SEEKING TO LEAVE COUNTRY, BUT THERE IS QUESTION AS TO WHETHER AIRLINES WILL FLY IF PASSENGERS GOING ONLY IN ONE DIRECTION. ALITALIA REPS ARE OPTIMISTIC THAT RESTRICTION WILL END BY THIS WEEKEND, BUT IN VIEW OF SIX-WEEK RESTRICTIONS (INCLUDING EMBASSY'S TELEGRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS) FOLLOWING RATSIMANDRAVA'S ASSASSINATION IN FEBRUARY 1975, WE ARE NOT SO SANGUINE. IT IS DIFFICULT TO ESTABLISH REASON(S) FOR CURRENT RESTRICTION, ESPECIALLY SINCE THERE IS NO RESTRICTION FOR LEAVING MADAGASCAR.

3. TANANARIVE WAS ALREADY RIPE WITH RUMORS PRIOR TO HELICOPTER ACCIDENT (REFTEL) AND, THEREFORE, RUMORS ABOUT SABOTAGE OF FLIGHT EMERGED ALMOST IMMEDIATELY AFTER PUBLIC WAS TOLD THE NEWS. FRENCH ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION TEAM ARRIVED AUGUST 2, PRESUMABLY AT BEHEST OF GDRM. AT FIRST, TEAM WAS PREVENTED FROM GOING INTO IMMEDIATE ACTION, ALLEGEDLY ON ORDERS OF PRESIDENCY, BUT EVENTUALLY RECEIVED AUTHORITY TO PROCEED. SINCE GDRM AUTHORITIES REMOVED HELICOPTER WRECKAGE FROM SCENE OF ACCIDENT TO TANANARIVE, FRENCH TEAM MAY HAVE DIFFICULTY IN CONDUCTING INVESTIGATION. MOREOVER, HELICOPTER COMPACTED INTO SMALL, TANGLED MESS AT TIME OF CRASH AND RESCUE WORKERS USED CRUDE TOOLS TO RECOVER THE BODIES, MOST OF WHICH WERE BEYOND RECOGNITION.

SHEINBAUM

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: STATE FUNERALS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 AUG 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976TANANA01268
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760302-0210
From: TANANARIVE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760882/aaaacugr.tel
Line Count: 87
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 TANANARIVE 1247
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20 APR 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <13 SEP 2004 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HUNDRED THOUSAND ATTEND PRIME MINISTER'S FUNERAL
TAGS: PDIP, MA, (RAKOTOMALALA, JOEL)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006